

Literature.

Swiss Voyages on the Seine, the Moselle, and the Rhine; with Railroad Visits to the principal Cities of Belgium, &c. &c. By MICHAEL J. QUIN, Esq.—London: Henry Colburn, Great Marlborough-street.

THIS work presents a notable contrast to the publication of Victor Hugo, of which we last week gave the reader some account. The book of the French author is distinguished by three characteristics: a sense of the beautiful in architecture, manifested alike by an enthusiastic appreciation of form, and a sagacious perception of causes, moral as well as physical, rarely equalled, and never surpassed; a passion, as in a poet was to be expected, for legends of the olden time, to the grandeur, terror, and pathos of which he lends new force; and lastly, a certain self-glorifying, mocking spirit pervading the whole book, and often provoking the reader to fling it aside in disgust. The work of Mr. Quin, on the other hand, has none of these qualities: from first to last it is chatty, lively, entertaining, but never poetical nor profound. He sees castles, hills, rivers, rocks, forests, plains, all appealing as forcibly to the imagination and the senses as the scenes visited by the impassioned Frenchman; he gives, moreover, an idea of them quite as correct, though not quite so suggestive; but he manages to do this without throwing his readers into transports of enthusiasm or agonies of distress. There is, in fact, a difference between the two books as marked, and by similar distinctions marked, as there is between the calm self-possession and subdued cheerfulness of an English gentleman and the declamatory style, all gesture, grimace, volubility, and passion of the representative of "Young France."

Mr. Quin seems to have made a point of noting down every thing that struck his fancy, without, however, troubling himself with details, or seeking to describe minutely. The subjects, therefore, that would more particularly interest the readers of this journal, are treated in a light and superficial manner. Every thing, nevertheless, that deserves commemoration, is noticed, and as a supplement to the guide-books, the work, especially as the author everywhere exhibits a correct and refined taste, may be relied on.

From the passages which we had noted for extraction, we select the following:—

CAST-IRON TOWER AT ROTEN.

"It may be remembered that a few years ago, a great part of the principal tower of the cathedral was struck down by the electric fluid during a tremendous storm. The damage has been since repaired in a most extraordinary manner—a manner peculiarly French. An imitation of the former summit, which was remarkable for its light and airy appearance in consequence of its being pierced through in every possible direction, has been framed in cast-iron; and this awful pile has been planted on that portion of the old tower which survived the tempest. I say awful, because it is calculated to attract the lightning so powerfully when the storm shall again collect its force in the neighbourhood of Rothen; and should vibration take place, and the mass tumble, as it seems always threatening to do, the devastation it must produce would be terrific. The difference of its colour from the lower part of the tower, and from that of the sacred edifice in general, is a deformity which no lapse of time can remedy."

CHAPEL OF ST. MATTHEW, COBERN.

"The ruins upon the height behind the little town of Cobern may be justly said to wear an air of peculiar grandeur. They consist principally of two castles, surrounded by massive walls of cut stone, according to the modern usage. Within the enclosure of the upper castle stands one of the most remarkable chapels in Europe, dedicated in honour of the apostle St. Matthew. It has been lately restored by a skillful architect, and is well worth examination. The best account I could find of this edifice represents it as constructed in the oriental style of which very few examples are to be seen in the Rhenish countries, and only one or two in Italy. It is in the form of the baptistery of Constantine, near the church of St. John Lateran, in Rome, or, in other words, of the church of the Holy Sepulchre. The model of it is said to have been brought over from Palestine by the Burggraf Henri d'Isenbourg, a near relative of Gerlach the younger, lord of Cobern, who described himself in all his acts as "Cruce Signatus." It is a hexagon of five-and-twenty feet in diameter, in the middle of which a second hexagon is elevated, terminating in a cupola of ten feet in diameter; the cupola is

lighted by six windows, and sustained by six columns, each of which rests upon clusters of four small pillars, united by arches. The windows resemble the ace of clubs in shape. The exact date of the construction of this very graceful building is unknown; it is well ascertained, however, that a perpetual lamp, established by the Archbishop Bolmond, was burning in it in the year 1360.

"The imposing beauty of this celebrated chapel, and its position upon a steep rock, had preserved it from injury, until the period of the passage of the Rhine by the allied armies in 1814, when some volunteer chasseurs, placed for observation in the town, entered the chapel in a state of intoxication, and broke one of the most elegant sculptures by which the altar was adorned. A holy hermit who lived near it collected the fragments, and took care of them while he lived. Their subsequent fate is unknown. The people of the country call this edifice the Church of the Knights Templar, very probably because, after the abolition of the order, several of its members resided at Altenberg for some years. It was the principal station of the great pilgrimage which used to take place every year upon the festival of St. Matthew, and which the inhabitants of Coblenz formerly extended along the banks of the Moselle, as far as Treven. The character of the country near Cobern, and the fashion of the houses, give it very much of a Swiss aspect."

PRECAUTIONS AS TO INTERMENTS AT FRANKFORD.

"I saw here, for the first time, a curious contrivance for guarding against the perils of premature interment. It is well ascertained that cases have occurred in which a profound lethargy, presenting all the appearances of death, has been mistaken for the absolute departure of the soul from the body. The cases, well authenticated, of this nature are certainly not numerous—at least, few have been discovered, in consequence of the rapidity with which, in most countries, the supposed inanimate remains are conveyed to that bourne whence no voice can be heard. I have myself seen, in Constantinople, the bodies of Greeks, who were believed to have died of the plague, carried to the grave in the clothes which they were accustomed to wear, and before the blush of life had wholly faded from the countenance, they were taken on a bier, not even enclosed in a shroud, and resigned to the earth within an hour after the malady had been presumed to have terminated fatally. It struck me most forcibly that in some of these cases premature burial must have taken place.

"The precautions used in the Frankfort cemetery against unhappy accidents of this kind, are simple and, in the event of reanimation, would, I imagine, be found effectual. The body is first conveyed to the chapel, where the funeral service is read by a clergyman of the religion of the individual accounted as dead: it is then removed to a sepulchral chamber, where a lamp is kept always burning; the lid of the coffin is taken off, and upon the top of each of the fingers and thumbs of the shrouded figure are placed small bells, or rather, indeed, thimbles, to which are attached wires communicating with a bell, which sounds upon the slightest movement of either of the hands. In an adjoining room attendants, who relieve each other at regulated hours during the day and night watch for the sound of this bell. An apparatus is in the attendants' chamber, which is contrived to shew whether in the night-time any of them may have slumbered even for a moment. I do not know whether I rightly understand the explanation given to us of this machine; but I believe the attendant was obliged to wind it up every five minutes, and if he failed to do so, it would of itself register his omission on a dial to which he had no access. The thimbles, moreover, easily slipped off, so that, as it was his duty frequently to visit the sepulchral chamber, he would at once perceive whether any movement of the hands had occurred, which might have failed to set the bell in motion. If no sign of returning life has exhibited itself within a certain number of days, then the sexton takes charge of the body, and deposits it in the grave already prepared for it.

"We anxiously inquired whether any instance had yet occurred in which this ingenious and humane contrivance had been the means of the restoration to society of any person who had been supposed to have disappeared from it for ever. The answer was in the negative. The attendant, however, added, that on one occasion the bell had been faintly heard, but upon examination it was found that the occurrence must have been the result of some accident, such as might have been caused by a galvanic movement of the hands undergoing the process of decomposition."

FLOATING BRIDGE AT NECKARSTINGH.

"The machinery for moving the floating bridge is a simple, and for a river so liable as this to be swollen in the winter above its banks, of a very safe description. A boat is anchored at some distance

above the bridge, with which it is connected by a chain of other boats. When the bridge is let loose on one bank, the force of the current acting on the chain of boats gives to the bridge an impetus which swings it to the opposite side, describing a semicircle of which the anchored boat is the centre. Men with grappling hooks are in attendance to draw the bridge with its burden to the land, when the horses, which had been separated from the carriage, are put to and resume their journey."

An advertisement, prefixed to the narrative, informs us that the writer, while revising the proof-sheets, "became seriously ill, and died at Boulogne, where he had for some time been residing for the benefit of his health." Judging from the work before us, we cannot but say that the literature of this country has sustained a loss. Mr. Quin was evidently a man of an elegant and accomplished mind; well acquainted with books, not unfamiliar with men, and animated by a sincere desire to promote the cause of truth, and advance the good of society.

The Rhine, translated from the French of Victor Hugo.—D. M. Aird, Tavistock-street, Covent-garden.

(Continued from No. 24.)

THE progress of Victor Hugo is marked by reflection and observations altogether new and stirring; upon an intellect of daguerrotype quality, no object of interest to which it was applied escaped indelible impression. Alternately grave, gay, philosophical, or facetious, he has given us a *négligé* that will be long ere it tires. Approaching Soissons, with its plain, which the eyes of the greatest amongst military leaders had scanned and selected as the arena of mortal struggle for dominion, he observes: "I saw with the mind's eye peace hovering over the plain, now solitary and tranquil, where Cæsar had conquered, Clovis had exercised his authority, and where Napoleon had all but fallen. It shews that men, even Cæsar, Clovis, and Napoleon, are only passing shadows; and that war is a fantasy which terminates with them; whilst God—and nature, which comes from God—and peace, which comes from nature—are things of eternity."

The letter on Aix-la-Chapelle is full of interest: its attractions to the tourist of every grade; its legends, its relics, and the tomb of Charlemagne, are described with a rigour seldom present in books of travel. At Cologne we have the author's first glimpse of the Rhine. "The rain, wind, and fog, which were abundant for the last four days, gave way to a sun which, shedding its rays upon the scenery of the Rhine, induced me to embrace the opportunity of seeing this classic stream in all its riches, in all its loveliness, in all its charms." His impression upon a view of the Dome of Cologne, that immense superstructure, which modern devotion, and a desire to achieve plans that have been abandoned for so long a series of ages, proposes to crown with spires, outwying all previous efforts, is thus given: "The dream of Engelbert de Berg, which was realized into an edifice under Conrad de Hochsteden, may, in an age or two, be the greatest cathedral in the world. This incomplete *Iliad* sees Homer's in futurity. The church was shut. I surveyed the steeples, and was startled at their dimensions. What I had taken for towers are the projections of the buttresses. Though only the first story is completed, the building is already nearly as high as the towers of Notre Dame, at Paris. Should the spires, according to the plan, be placed upon this monstrous trunk, Strasburgh would be, comparatively speaking, small by its side. It has always struck me that nothing resembles ruins so much as an unfinished edifice. Briars, saxifrage, and pellitories, indeed, all the weeds that root themselves in the crevices and at the base of old buildings, have besieged these venerable walls. Man only constructs what nature in time destroys."

Were we to follow our inclination, it would be to quote more largely, but it is difficult to select where all is so appropriate and well given. Hugo's "Rhine" is effective as a guide, and unrivalled in details of local and classical interest.

The navigable ship canal, to unite the Red Sea and the Mediterranean by a cut directly north from Suez on the Red Sea to Lake Menzaleh, is proceeding under the Pasha's auspices.